conditioner, said firmly fixing operation being performable at an installation site of the multi-unit type air conditioner in which another end portion is fitted to the one of the refrigerant pipes; and

a common communication port through which the refrigerant can flow in a confluent state, said common communication port being provided in said branch pipe joint body;

wherein said plurality of connecting pipes each has one end portion fitted to one of said communication ports and another end portion fitted to one of said refrigerant pipes having different outer diameters, each of the one end portions having the same outer diameter, while at least some of the another end portions have inner diameters different from each other,

and wherein a part of said communication ports is directly firmly fixed to a part of said refrigerant pipes without using the connecting pipes.

24. (Amended) A method of connecting refrigerant pipes of a multi-unit type air conditioner, the method comprising the steps of:

preparing a branch pipe joint body having a hollow shape and a plurality of communication ports each having the same inner diameter;

selecting connecting pipes from a group of connecting pipes at an installation site of the multi-unit type air conditioner, each of the selected connecting pipes having one end portion having an outer diameter enabling the one end portion to be fitted to said communication ports and another end portion having an inner diameter enabling the another end portion to be fitted to one of the plurality of the refrigerant pipes having different outer diameters, said group of connecting pipes and said branch pipe joint body having been packed in one package; and

connecting said branch pipe joint body to said refrigerant pipes through the selected connecting pipes using firm fixing,

wherein the number of said connecting pipes in said group of connecting pipes is larger than the number of said communication ports, and is set such that a total number of the connecting pipes having a minimum inner diameter and a maximum inner diameter is smaller than a number of the connecting pipes having an inner diameters other than the minimum and maximum inner diameters,

and wherein some of said communication ports are directly firmly fixed to some of said refrigerant pipes without using the connecting pipes.

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

Claims 23 and 28 have been indicated as being allowable if rewritten in independent form. Claims 23 and 28 have therefore been canceled, and the subject matter of these claims has been introduced into Claims 19 and 24, respectively. Since Claims 19 and 24 are now allowable and represent the only independent claims in the application, Applicant respectfully submits that the present application is in a condition for allowance and respectfully solicits and early Notice of Allowability.

Respectfully submitted,

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